

ENHANCEMENT OF PROMOTIONAL POTENTIAL:  
A HYPOTHESIS

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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



# THESIS

ENHANCEMENT OF PROMOTIONAL POTENTIAL:

A HYPOTHESIS

by

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September 1978

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Enhancement of Promotional Potential: A Hypothesis

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## ABSTRACT

Management literature has typically stressed abilities, learned skills and traits as characteristics which, if possessed, will ultimately lead to promotion. The author hypothesizes that because promotions are granted by superiors and organizations, it is their views of promotion potential that are germane to an individual's opportunity. Furthermore, the importance of the superior and the organization to the promotion process is directly related to the level of the manager seeking advancement. Two hypotheses are explored, which if confirmed, would help an individual enhance his promotion potential. Industry might utilize the same hypotheses to examine the merits of its promotion criteria.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. WHAT FACTORS LEAD TO PROMOTION

Picture two people of apparent equal technical competence being considered for promotion to the same position. One is selected. Why was this individual chosen? Why is an individual constantly passed over for promotion in one company, an instant success when he moves to another? Does the "Peter Principle"<sup>1</sup> work because companies deliberately choose individuals who do not measure up?

These kinds of questions have been asked by every individual who has ever been involved with an organization that utilizes promotion to reward its managers. The questions are typically answered by alluding to the "organization" as relying on random and idiosyncratic selection processes. Or, alternatively, that promotion decisions are based on antiseptic standardized procedures which are assumed to recognize the "right" person for promotion. Obviously, no one can predict the outcome of any selection process with certainty but one can consider how to maximize one's potential given the constraints of personal ability.

The reasons for advancement of individuals have been examined in detail with numerous conclusions. A myriad of factors, traits, abilities, etc. have been described as

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<sup>1</sup>The Peter Principle states that given enough time, each employee rises to, and remains at, his level of incompetence. (Peter and Hull, 1969, p. 27)





contributing to the success of an executive. One has only to go to a library to find numerous books on management theory which offer prescriptions on how to be a successful manager and executive. But, if this knowledge were all that was required for success, why do some individuals get further up the executive ladder than others, given their technical/managerial skills are no better and are sometimes even worse, than those of their successful competitors? (Mines, 1978, p. 12)

Each year thousands of college graduates enter the business community with visions of ascending to the top of the corporate ladder through hard work, dedication and other qualities spelled out in management texts. Yet few ever achieve their objective. They also observe that others of lesser apparent capabilities overtake and ascend rapidly beyond them.

One thing is clear. It is difficult to identify the things an individual should do to maximize his promotional potential once he has assimilated and adopted the textbook skills associated with being a good executive.

Executive "head-hunters" indicate the marketplace is starving for executives, with demand exceeding supply. It would appear either that the job of the manager must be composed of something not addressed in management texts or that few individuals have mastered what these texts propose as necessary for success.



## B. HYPOTHESES

In attempting to identify the overriding factor contributing to an individual's promotion, the author advances the following hypotheses:

### HYPOTHESIS #1

The success of an otherwise competent manager is dependent on his ability to recognize and respond to the premises of his immediate superior and the premises of the organization as a whole.

### HYPOTHESIS #2

With each step up the executive ladder the importance of the premises of the superior as they relate to the subordinate decreases while the importance of the premises of the organization increases.

Both hypotheses will be explained in more detail later in this section.

In order to understand the hypotheses it is essential that the concept of the term "organization" be clarified. As used in the hypotheses, the term extends beyond the individual's immediate functional unit. It also includes all things external to the functional unit with which the individual must interface. For example, the effective Chief Executive Officer's organizational interface is the environment in which his parent organization operates (e.g., market, competitors, regulatory agencies, etc.). For a first level engineering



manager, the organizational interface is more restricted and may be limited to his superior and other first level engineering managers.

### 1. Hypothesis #1

The hypothesis deals with the importance of one's superior and the organization as a whole to one's career. Previous works have suggested the importance of the superior (Schoonmaker, 1971) (Elsasser, 1976, p. 115) and the organization (Perrow, 1976, p. 4) (Litterer, 1973, pp. 731-740). The hypothesis considers both as jointly making up the single factor most influential in determining promotional opportunities. Definitions for the terms competent manager, premises of the immediate superior, premises of the organization, success and organization appear in Appendix A.

### 2. Hypothesis #2

The hypothesis states that while at the lowest levels of management the premises of one's superior becomes the major controlling factor in determining promotional opportunities with the organization having minimum effect. As one ascends the management ladder and becomes more visible and influential within the organization, the need to satisfy the the premises of the organization increases. Paripassu the need to satisfy the premises of the superior decreases. Figure 1 depicts this process in graphical form.

One may also place the hypothesis in the context of who does the promoting, the hypothesis being that at the lowest levels of management the immediate superior is the most



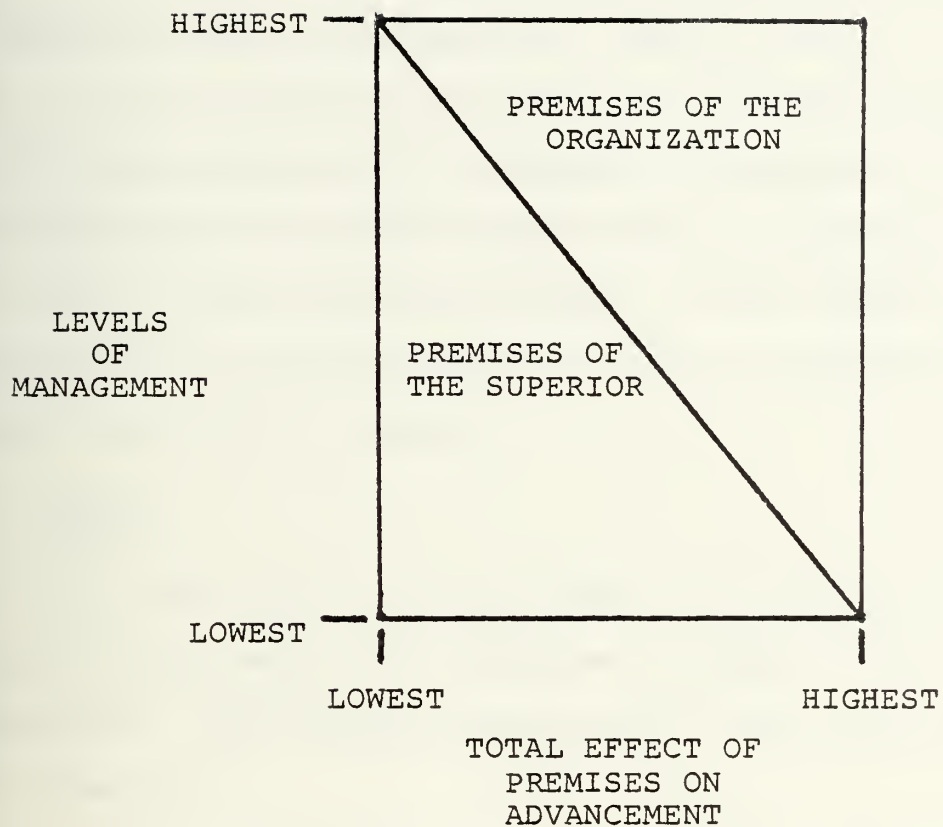


Figure 1. Relative effect of Superior and Organization on promotion at various levels of management





influential factor in determining promotions. Often he personally selects his replacement, or if not empowered to do so, determines the selection by training or recommending a selected subordinate. (Packard, 1962, p. 182)

As the level of the position increases in the organization, the dominance of the superior decreases as selection may cross unit lines and higher levels of management become involved in the selection process. At the highest levels, management as a whole becomes involved in determining individuals who will be promoted.

#### C. INTENT

It is the intent of this thesis to report the results of a preliminary search for evidence in support of the stated hypotheses, and thereby contribute to answering the following questions:

1. How can an individual maximize his own promotion potential?
2. How can an organization recognize those employees with executive potential?
3. How can potential executives be trained?
4. How does an organization recognize areas of weakness and strength around which to mold a development program?
5. What are the causes for executive failure and/or breakdown?
6. How does an organization recognize an appropriate reward system?



#### D. SCOPE

The study was conducted by first reviewing previous efforts at identifying individuals who possess the potential for eventual promotion to the top. The results appear in Chapter II. Following that effort, research was undertaken by reviewing existing literature regarding the impact of the superior and organizations on promotion. Additionally, interviews with a corporate personnel director and nine naval officers were conducted to determine individual perceptions of what factors entered into and affected the promotion process. The results are contained in Chapter III. Chapter IV contains conclusions arrived at as a result of information presented in the previous chapter. Chapter V contains recommendations and offers avenues for further exploration of the hypotheses.



## II. PREVIOUS EFFORTS

Identifying those individuals who possess the potential to rise to the top of the organizational ladder has been of interest to many people for many years. The approach to the problem has typically centered around the identification of what the executive does or what traits, talents or characteristics he has. The objectives of compiling such information are twofold.

First, individuals who are desirous of ascending the organization can be expected to modify their behavior to conform to standards. This would provide benefits to the individual as well as the organization through emphasis on relative criteria.

Secondly, organizations desire as much certainty in ensuring managerial performance as possible. Knowledge of what constitutes the promotional requirements for a good executive will enable management to accomplish its short and long range objectives via executive selection and training programs. More definitive promotion criteria can then be formulated and subsequently conveyed to current managers.

Studies have shown a wide variance in managers' perceptions of promotion criteria within the same organization. (Gemmill & De Salvia, 1977, p. 80), (Tarnovieski, 1973, p. 52), (Heisler, 1978, p. 59) Divergent interpretations sometimes lead to morale problems or, more often, to concentration of effort by managers in areas of self improvement



which may or may not conform to actual organization criteria or support organization goals and objectives.

A recent study of 369 executives, using indicators of executive capacity compiled from literature and empirical observations, suggests that the management literature containing these indicators of success is lacking in validity.

(Leshko and Vosseteig, 1975, pp. 49-50) The authors raise the possibility that the environmental factors for each executive affect each executive's own success. One may include these environmental factors as part of the premises of the individual organization, a term which will be defined subsequently.

Further research attempting to identify and predict executive and managerial potential was done by Rowe, Rudeen and Wenke (1976). Responses from 212 Government and Civilian executives/managers supported the contention that management behavior cannot be predicted by reference to existing literature.

Gemmill and De Salvia (1977) undertook to examine the relative importance of organizational politics, public image and performance as factors in the promotion process. The study attempted to (1) identify managers' perception of various promotion criteria within their firms and (2) determine how these perceptions related to the manager who had experienced upward mobility within the firm. The results indicated no difference between the perception of those managers who had experienced upward mobility and those who had not as to





what constitutes managerial proficiency. Of interest was the finding that successful managers tended to discount public image and organizational politics as influential in the promotion process to a greater degree than did unsuccessful managers. There are two alternative likely explanations of this difference in perception: (1) Successful managers preferred to think ability determined their success when in fact some other factor was the cause, or (2) They were actually rewarded for their ability which confirmed their philosophy, that ability leads to promotion.

The three studies mentioned indicate that we have yet to identify the factors which can be equated with potential.

Another line of attack on this problem is to consider the number of proposed lists of executive key characteristics. Twenty-nine such lists are given by Elsassner (1976, pp. 135-164). A sample of five of the lists is included in Appendix B. Examination of these lists reveals that traits supposedly isolated as important to executives are also important to non-executives. (Packard, 1962, p. 131) Furthermore, the disparities between these lists are evidence of a lack of agreement.

The steps usually perceived as the path to success are: examine what constitutes a good executive, attempt to acquire those skills, and wait to be recognized and advanced. But this clearly does not happen in the business environment. No one would suggest that every executive promoted is totally capable in his new assignment, nor would one conclude that



all who would be capable of a higher position, get promoted. As in most things in life, as one must work to maintain an acceptable level of performance, one must also work at getting promoted. To expect good work to result in automatic advancement is pure mythology.

Notwithstanding the above, many managers persist in adding to their training credits new sets of rules to apply to the job environment. The result is a large pool of educated business men who are destined to fail in their attempt to rise to the top of the organization. (Miller, 1973, p. 3) What managers fail to recognize is that there are factors other than technical and managerial expertise that impact on promotion. These factors must be recognized and considered when formulating a career plan.



### III. EXAMINATION OF THE SUPERIOR AND THE ORGANIZATION

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, development of characteristics, attributes and skills associated with executive ability does not result in recognition and eventual promotion in all cases. Many men have all the qualities desired for executives, but don't appear to have them. And appearances make more impact on people than reality. (Schoonmaker, 1971, p. 112)

One may plan and develop those skills which theorists unequivocally state as necessary to an effective executive. As often as not, the ultimate selection for advancement within an organization is made by individuals who do not have the means or ability to accurately recognize the quality of past performance of an individual. This is partly due to the fact that as one ascends the management ladder, more and more of the working elements of the job become unquantifiable. As a result, performance evaluation necessarily becomes more subjective. (Reeves, 1971, p. 72)

The process of evaluating a candidate for promotion, it would appear, comes to be guided by factors other than technical and managerial competence (which determine performance). Individuals who continuously satisfy these factors throughout their careers, either by design or coincidence, eventually rise to the top.

In the subsequent sections the superior and the organization will be examined individually and jointly to ascertain their impact on the promotion process.



## A. THE SUPERIOR

Within the organization the immediate superior is acknowledged as the single most important individual to the aspiring manager. It is he who writes performance appraisals, recommends pay raises and dictates training and job responsibilities. (Schoonmaker, 1971, p. 116) (Hegarty, 1978, p. 59)

Quite often the superior also grooms selected individuals as potential candidates to succeed him. Through preselection by the superior, an individual may become the only qualified applicant for the subsequent vacancy, or, at least enjoys a substantial advantage in the promotion stakes.

Peter Drucker (1977, p. 8) alleges that how individuals handle their boss is one of the few indicators of who in the organization is going places. He goes on to say that you can spot the comers because they do something about managing the boss. One must recognize a superior as being an individual with personal likes and dislikes and his own level of competence. Addressing oneself to his situation allows an individual to assess future opportunity and plan accordingly.

Despite the importance of the superior in a manager's career, few individuals ever think it worth taking the time or trouble to analyze their bosses. (Miller, 1973, p. 62) Consequently, they cannot but fail to discover the premises of their superior.

The phrase "different strokes for different folks" applies to superiors as much as to anyone else. Consider any management text and the different styles likely to be described





therein. The range typically stretches from the participative to the autocratic, with a number in between. (Webber, 1975, p. 164) Management style is only one factor to consider when defining what makes any superior tick. Many factors make up how the individual conducts business, from major considerations such as management style to minor ones such as choice of hair length. It is the summation of these factors which has been referred to as the "premises of the superior" and defined in Appendix A.

This boils down to a situation in which the superior rates the individual on how the output of the individual conforms to the superior's desired output. Should this superior be competent, he may evaluate his subordinate in terms of performing useful work. However, if the superior is incompetent, his definition of competence may be that behavior of the subordinate that supports the status quo in the bureaucracy. (Peter & Hull, 1968, p. 42)

To determine how the superior measures performance is key to the future success of an individual and must be determined prior to developing one's approach to his work. Whether a manager is labeled competent or not is determined not by outsiders but by his superior in the hierarchy.

Knowing and conforming to the premises of the superior is mandatory if one expects to maximize opportunities within the organization. Failure to acknowledge this subordinate relationship by modifying one's behavior to conform to the superior's premises will most likely result in stagnation.



Insistence on acting as an independent is particularly dangerous during the transition through middle management as this is the period where attention to the premises of the superior and the organization are most important. In fact, the independent middle manager is claimed to have virtually no chance to acceded to executive levels. (Packard, 1962, p. 127) -

However important the superior is perceived to advancement, dependence on one individual is potentially dangerous. Problems develop when the superior loses his position of authority, leaves the concern or modifies his perception of the subordinate. If the superior is perceived as blocking advancement, seeking transfer from his authority is probably the only recourse. (Hegarty, 1978, p. 112)

An alternative is to bypass the superior, which may result in other potential problems, depending upon where an individual is in the hierarchy. This situation will be examined in the analysis of the organization vs. the superior, Part C.

## B. THE ORGANIZATION

Examination of any hypothesis on executive advancement must take account of the organizational structure involved. Experts in executive placement mention the importance of company environment before choosing a man for an opening. If the individual under consideration does not fit the particular environment, his success is questionable. Environment varies according to industry, company and department within



a company and, in fact, the individual with whom you will have to work most closely. (Packard, 1962, p. 112)

Because the organization attempts to select managers who conform to a mold, individuals must consider the organization's perceptions and goals. Most managers automatically assume that the goals of an organization are given and, by so doing, fail to consider the possibility that there might be different interpretations of the goals. The fact that other goals might impact on the desired behavior of individuals and subsequently on the organization's perception of their performance and potential has often been ignored. (March & Simon, 1958, p. 124)

Goals of organizations are not universal. Goals of maximum profit at lowest costs, for instance, have been taken as given in manufacturing industries for many years. Yet industry has, over the past twenty years, become more involved in social objectives such as hiring women and minorities, pollution issues and plant expansion in areas of high unemployment. More discriminatory objectives include promoting only Ivy League graduates or members of the local country club. Considering the variety of potential goals, one must know the real goals of the organization in order to establish the standards in force. (Perrow, 1972, pp. 12-13)

Neglecting the realities of organizational goals results in deploring patronage and collusion in organizations as if those phenomena were the result of a failure to apply sound organizational principles. A more realistic view would be





to examine and question the goals to which an organization subscribes in order to assess one's position and future opportunity within it.

One may look at the mechanics of the organization and equate the same to the overworked phrase "political organization." Today the term often carries a derogatory meaning. However, to be political really means to exert influence on the behavior of those whom one does not control or supervise directly. A "political organization," then, is one in which influence is the prevailing means of effecting change. Virtually every organization is thus "political." This is a healthy condition because it deemphasizes centralized power. (Weiss, 1978, p. 3)

The ability to use "political" influence does not, by itself, make a successful executive, but to deliberately eschew such influence is to relegate oneself to obscurity. Why do people use political techniques? Isn't it because they understand that one does not get to the top in business on ability or hard work alone, nor on the exclusive incorporation of traits and characteristics identified in management texts? The winners know they need something else working for them. (Hegarty, 1964, pp. 4-5)

The decentralization of power in "political" organizations was made evident in a study examining promotional factors utilized by major organizations as seen by the Chief Executive Officers of those corporations. The conclusion was that one must "play the game" to achieve upward mobility





even though, from an idealistic point of view the "game" is felt to be undesirable. (Heisler, 1978, p. 61)

Examining the responses of these executives, it further becomes clear that despite being at the very top of the management ladder, they do not totally control the premises of the organization as the premises relate to promotional considerations. The executives themselves acknowledged that they were not in total agreement with what they perceived as the promotional criteria applied within their own organizations. While the CEO undoubtedly has the singularly most important impact on formulating these premises, he does not have total control over their "enforcement." As a result of this, one is forced to conclude that the operative premises of the organization are some sort of amalgam of the premises of all its managers and as such will not be entirely self-consistent.

The organizational and social environment in which the manager finds himself determines what consequences he will anticipate, what ones he will not; what alternatives he will consider, what ones he will ignore. (March and Simon, 1958, p. 139) His ability to examine the organization and make the appropriate choices is of the essence when it comes to achieving his goal of advancement. This includes determining how to contribute to organization objectives.

The focus on contribution turns the executive's attention away from his specialty, his own narrow skills, his own department and towards the performance of the whole. He is



faced with the task of having to think through how his skills, his specialty, his function or his department relate to the entire organization and its purpose. (Drucker, 1966, p. 53)

Failure to ascertain the objectives and goals of the organization not only impacts on the future of the individual, but creates the real danger of his becoming a major obstruction within the organization. Modification of his behavior to contribute to the organization is essential if he is to be perceived as a member of the team. (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 175)

The organizational objectives which subordinates strive to achieve are set by themselves, but any discrepancy between their objectives and what the superior or organization views as correct will stand out strongly. (Drucker, 1966, p. 66)

The differentiation of objectives must be considered a negative factor when evaluating promotion potential for an individual. Those doing the promoting are likely to consider objectives that are not in concert with their own as negative indicators of an individual's potential.

#### C. ORGANIZATION VS. SUPERIOR

In the two preceding sections we have discussed the effects of the organization and of the superior on promotion opportunities. It is now appropriate to consider the relationships between the two as they relate to the promotion selection process within the organization. In order to examine this relationship in a live situation, as perceived by those directly involved with the process, civilian and military applications were considered.



## 1. Civilian Application

The approach to managerial promotions was discussed with the director of home office personnel of one of the nation's largest corporations. His comments indicated first and second level supervisory personnel were selected virtually exclusively on the individuals' superior's evaluation and recommendations. As exposure increases up the organizational chain, more people impact on the selection process prior to approval by higher authority. Personnel involved at various times were personnel administrators, the immediate superior, the future superior, and other executives/managers with knowledge of the candidate or those who would be his new peers if selected. Although no general rule was established for every case, more involvement by more organizational elements as one ascended the organization was strongly implied.

## 2. Military Application

In order to evaluate the relationship between the effects of the superior and the organization in the military, nine officers who had either failed selection for promotion, or had served on a promotion board, were questioned regarding their perceptions on the subject.

Those failing selection to Lieutenant Commander, a lower middle management rank, acknowledged conflict with an immediate superior. In the minds of those questioned, this resulted in an evaluation low enough to result in non-selection. One such adverse report was perceived as sufficient to cause non-selection.





Those failing selection to Commander, an upper middle management rank, cited a variety of causes. Commonly mentioned were superior evaluations, duty assignments, and the lack of personal interaction with the relevant officer community. It is interesting to note that a thesis on promotion patterns and duty assignments in the Navy Supply Corps pointed strongly to a positive correlation between promotion and duty assignments. (Selgelid and Perry, 1976, p. 90)

Captains striving for the rank of Rear Admiral could not cite any past superior's evaluation which they considered detrimental to selection. What was perceived as contributing to non-selection was the lack of a positive relationship with headquarters, having a functional specialty not in demand, functional specialty too narrow and lack of visibility with those in the organizational hierarchy. The rank of Captain is usually considered to be at the executive level.

Observations from two officers who had the opportunity to serve on selection boards were recorded. One was on a board selecting Captains, the other on a selection board for Lieutenants. In the latter case, selection was made virtually by the numbers, that is, officers' evaluation scores from previous duty stations were totaled and compared with a cutoff point. This point was established on the basis of the number of promotions allowed by higher authority. That is to say, the superior's evaluation was the only factor considered. (The fact that the immediate superior does not always sign the fitness report is of no consequence as he





does it for the reporting senior and it is normally ratified without change.)

In the Captain selection board, although evaluations played an important part, other trade-offs were considered. An in-depth analysis of each candidate was made and presented by a member of the board. The information presented included performance assessments, level of difficulty of assignment, perceptions of the individual's superior (particularly if the superior was judged to be exacting and difficult to work for) and any firsthand knowledge of the individual's situation of a positive nature. It was specifically mentioned that personal opinions of board members that could be construed as detrimental to a candidate were prohibited by mutual understanding.

### 3. Observations

Consideration of the civilian and military cases appears to indicate the following:

- a. That the immediate superior has maximum impact on promotion at the lowest levels.
- b. That as one ascends the ranks, civilian or military, one becomes subject to a broader spectrum of evaluation criteria, if for no other reason than that the number of individuals who get to "vote" on your nomination is larger.
- c. That there is no formalized and structured managerial promotion procedure.



This lack of a formal promotional procedure with specific written objective criteria in both the civilian and military environment supports the contention that managerial performance is not, and perhaps cannot be objectively evaluated. (Evans, 1976, p. 62) In any event, subjective criteria dominate the selection process, and these subjective criteria are rooted in what we have called the premises of the superior and the premises of the organization.

Findings indicate that leadership in any organization is a highly relative process, with different combinations of supervisory-leadership skills and practices being in evidence at different levels of supervision in the same organization and at different times in the life of an organization. (Mann, 1965, p. 103) These skills and practices are dictated partly by the written and unwritten goals, policies and objectives of the organization and partly by the personal preferences of individual managers. As organizational personnel are constantly changing, the premises of the organization are also changing, necessitating at least periodic reassessment of the situation by the individual aspiring to rise to the hierarchy. It is true that as one ascends the corporation ladder, the subjectivity of performance evaluation increases, thus allowing an increase in self-determination of how an individual operates. (Reeves, 1971, pp. 72-73) While this self-determination may be welcome, it also presents the opportunity to stumble.



Failure to put effort into identifying what is desired by the superior and the organization and the relative strength of each on the next step of the ladder, may mean the end of the line as far as future promotions are concerned. While in the civilian environment this can sometimes be corrected by movement to another organization, such shifts are more difficult for military personnel whose specialized skills, obtained in the service, may be of little value in the civilian community, and whose vested interest in retirement and security discourages them to look beyond the boundaries of the service until eligible for retirement.



#### IV. SUMMARY

The hypotheses set forth in this thesis suggest an approach to career planning for individuals who desire to maximize the likelihood of rising within the corporate pyramid. By analyzing the superior's and the organization's premises and modifying behavior accordingly, one can serve one's own interests. Close examination of these premises at each level will permit the determination of future opportunities, likelihood of satisfying the premises, or rejection of the premises for personal or ethical reasons. Depending on the results of the examination, the decision to continue striving for advancement within the company or look elsewhere for employment can be intelligently made.

Organizations are continually assessing their managers' behavior and are focusing on those who appear to be modifying their behavior to conform to superior and organizational premises. These individuals are judged to possess the necessary foresight for maximizing their opportunities and, providing they are as competent in the functional sense, enjoy a distinct advantage over their peers.

Training of individuals identified as potential executives can be tailored to emphasize the skills and experience desired by each corporation. This assumes the reward pattern will be modified to permit recognition of new training programs that are different from those previously associated with success within the corporation.





Organizations may also consider the effect of these hypotheses on the corporate executive model it is developing. If dissatisfied with the outcomes of internal executive development, examining how the organizational premises are in essence forcing the astute manager to conform to the mold, may permit changes which will provide the desired talent.

The hypotheses also provide possible explanation of the "Peter Principle." If executive competence in the technical sense were the only factor in determining promotion (given the voluminous descriptions of what abilities executives should possess), it would appear that selection of the best would be relatively easy. However, if our hypotheses are valid, it is possible that an individual may be selected for promotion over another more technically competent, but less alive to the importance of the premises of his superior and the organization.

The organization can recognize an appropriate reward system by analyzing the career patterns and experience of its top managers and by comparing the results with what it perceives as ideal. The system can then be judged acceptable or not. For example, if all top managers have similar career patterns, that pattern must be evaluated in terms of organizational objectives. If a broader base of expertise is deemed more appropriate, the premises of the organization as they apply to experience must be modified. This would require top level attention until the premises of individual managers reflect the changes desired.



## V. CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapters have examined the impact of the superior and the organization, individually and jointly, on the promotional opportunities of managers. The impact of the superior and the organization in the selection process is all-encompassing. As one ascends the organizational hierarchy, one becomes more involved with the organization as a whole and therefore is evaluated by an ever-expanding segment of the organization. The widening range of evaluators serves to decrease the importance of the superior who, nevertheless, remains the single most important determinant.

The literature reviewed and the managers questioned directly provide evidence supportive of the hypotheses. To give further credibility to the hypotheses as stated, however, further in-depth research on the subject is needed. Chapter VI provides recommendations for further study.

Integrating the two hypotheses set forth in this thesis into one's strategy for advancement will not insure success to every individual. However, it is believed that an awareness will provide insights as to what may affect promotional opportunities. Managers may then use the hypotheses as a complement to managerial competency in their approach.



## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of a self-administered questionnaire to determine those individuals who possess the insights outlined in the hypotheses is recommended. A two-phased experimental design is suggested.

The objective of the initial phase would be to determine if individuals considered as "winners" tended to score higher on the questionnaire than those not so considered. Appendix C provides criteria for the determination of those considered "winners." These criteria are based on the determination of success by the analysis of salary progressions. (Laner, 1978) Use of salary growth as coincidental with development of personal capacity was first proposed by Jaques (1961).

Use of the interview technique is recommended in order to provide the interviewer with a firsthand impression of the acceptability of the test instrument. An unvalidated list of questions to serve as a starting point for the instrument is contained in Appendix D. The results of interviewing will also provide information on the clarity of the questions as well as feedback which might lead to the development of additional questions.

Should the hypotheses be substantiated by a high degree of correlation between the perception of the importance of the superior and the organization by the "winners," the development of a self-administered questionnaire would then be feasible.



The responses received during the initial interview phase, which relate to the hypotheses, and have a high correlation with the "winners," would be the basis for the questions developed. Testing could be accomplished by administering the instrument to a group of "winners" (as defined by salary/age) and a control group of "non-winners."

Development of such an instrument would provide information which will enable the individual to assess his current potential for promotion and will identify areas where modification of certain perceptions may be in order.





## APPENDIX A

### Definitions

Competent Manager - an individual possessing those skills necessary for the efficient and effective management of those duties assigned to his cognizance. This encompasses necessary management and technical skills associated with his position.

Premises of the Immediate Superior - those factors, methods, demands and criteria both written and unwritten which contribute to how a superior desires a subordinate to operate and thusly becomes the measurement tool by which the subordinate will be judged. Simple examples would be, a boss's unstated desire for subordinates to present suggested solutions when disclosing new problems or his stated policy of punctuality in reporting to work each day.

Premises of the Organization - Those written and unwritten rules by which the organization operates and thusly measures its members. These premises reflect the demands of the organization as a whole, including those of an individual's immediate superior. As these premises are made up of the premises of the total organization, they are constantly changing as the members of the organization change or modify their own premises.

Success - for the purpose of this thesis is defined as an individual's ability to be promoted.



## APPENDIX B

### Lists of Traits of Successful Executives

Source: Black (1957)

#### Leadership

Firm grasp of technical aspects

Skill in human relations

Courage to make decisions

Ability to sell ideas

Teaching ability

Source: Moses (1973, p. 122)

Manage time effectively

Organize effectively

Delegate effectively

Make effective decisions

Handle people skillfully

Be motivated

Identify with purpose of business

Source: Van Dersal (1975, p. 58)

Does well in present job

Has qualities of:

- Enthusiasm
- Initiative
- Imagination
- Patience
- Good humor



- Emotionally mature
- Good judgement
- Common sense

Asks questions

Conveys ideas clearly

Has broad interests

Gets along well with

- Peers
- Subordinates
- Supervisors

Source: Barnard (1960, p. 443)

Vitality

Endurance

Decisiveness

Persuasiveness

Responsibility

Intellectual capacity

Source: Strauss and Sayles (1972, p. 492)

Moves rapidly from job to job

(Both interorganizationally and  
intraorganizationally)

Flexible

Realistic

Sensitive to complexities of work environment

Seeks risk



Handles critical

Has a sponsor

Copies values of superiors

Is not concerned with pleasing subordinates and peers.





APPENDIX C

Salary Criteria for Determination of Successful Executives

1978 DOLLARS

<u>Age</u>	<u>Minimum Gross Salary</u>
27	\$29,000
29	31,350
31	34,200
33	37,600
35	41,000
37	44,400
39	47,800
41	51,200
43	54,600
45	58,000
47	61,600
49	65,200



## APPENDIX D

### Suggested Interview Questions

The recommendation to interview was chosen over use of a questionnaire in order to minimize the opportunity for an individual to take the time to analyze a question and respond with what he might perceive as the correct response. Although the opportunity exists for the same to occur during an interview, an opportunity to draw out an individual's true feelings with face-to-face discussions appeared as a more likely result. It is also believed that the individual will be more willing to discuss the subject provided complete confidence of an "off-the-record" approach is perceived. Verbal perceptions of his employer are considered to be more likely to be obtained vice written ones.

Interviews should be conducted on a one-on-one basis with the executive. It should be explained to the interviewees that the purpose of the interview is for general management research and all information received would not be attributed to any individual but would be considered and revealed only as part of a group response.

The questions put forth during the interview should be in the order described herein. However, the interviewer should attempt to integrate the questions as part of a general discussion of management ideas in order to remove as much of a feeling of the "third degree" as possible. Where a response appears to be given hesitantly, further probing



to ascertain the respondent's true feelings should be exercised.

#### QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS OF TEST INSTRUMENTS

1. Other than technical competence, what do you feel the company considers as most important when selecting managers for advancement?

This question is based on the hypothesis that successful managers will have perceived what the company desires in its executives and will have tailored their performance accordingly. (Reeves, 1971, pp. 75-77), (Hegarty, 1978, p. 32) Recognition of factors not typically identified in management texts is of primary concern.

2. What effect does your boss have on your next promotion assuming you would be promoted within the company?

This question is based on the hypothesis that having determined what is required for promotion, the successful executive will have assessed the importance of his superior in that process and will have formulated what his approach to the superior will be. (Reeves, 1971, pp. 191-192)

3. What effect would your boss have if you were to seek a higher position elsewhere?

This question is based upon the hypothesis that a successful executive will be aware of the importance of mobility for promotion and therefore would have considered the impact of his current superior on that possibility.



4. Who is most important to your future advancement, your boss or the rest of the organization? Why?

This question is based on the hypothesis that the successful executive will have examined his position in the firm, analyzed the organizational structure and determined to what degree various individuals affect his future promotion.

(Reeves, 1971, p. 72)

5. Do you feel you know what the company is looking for in its executives?

Although excluding the words, "technical competence" as in question one, this question is intended to reinforce question one and draw out additional information from the interviewee.

6. Can other managers at or above your boss's level impact on your future promotional opportunities? How?

This question is similar to question four, however, is aimed at determining if the successful executive has reduced the organization impact on future promotion to individual impacts and how they would affect the same.

7. Do you select your own managers?

This question is aimed at what promotion discretion the executive currently possesses and is analyzed along with question 13.





8. Does any other manager influence you in your selection?

How?

This question is to determine the existence of outside influence in the selection of managers and whether it is perceived as formal or informal process.

9. Do you feel that you affect other managers in their selections either directly or indirectly? How?

This question is based on the hypothesis that a successful executive will be influence conscious and will be knowledgeable of his influence on others. (Schoonmaker, 1971, p. 100)

10. What do you look for, other than technical competence, in selecting someone for promotion?

Similar to questions one and five, except this question examines the successful executive's own criteria for promotion.

11. Do you feel you know this organization very well?

12. If yes, do you consider this important and why or why not?

Questions 11 and 12 are based on the hypothesis that the successful executive will have examined the organization in order to: a) determine his goals and objectives, and b) determine how he should perform within the organization and thereby maximize promotional opportunities. (Shoonmaker, 1971, p. 129)



13. On a range of 1 to 10, 1 being the highest level of management, where do you stand within the organization?

This question is designed to determine the interviewee's perception of where he is on the management ladder. In turn, the response may be compared to his actual level as ascertained from the company's personnel office. The hypothesis is that a successful executive will have assessed his position in the organization.

14. Who is the most important to your subordinates' next promotion, you or the organization as a whole?

15. Could you stop a subordinate from being promoted by direct or indirect action?

16. Could you stop, by direct or indirect action, some other manager's subordinate from being promoted?

Questions 14, 15 and 16 are based on the hypothesis that the successful executive will be aware of the extent of his authority and power within the organization relative to promotions.

17. How important is "fitting in" to success in this organization? Why?

This question is based on the hypothesis that successful executives will be aware of the need to fit the environment in question in order to maintain the possibility of future promotion. (Packard, 1962, p. 112), (Mines, 1978, p. 141)



18. What to you think has contributed most to your success to date?

The basis for this question is the hypothesis that the successful executive will be aware of why he has been successful and will continue planning his future career.

19. How many times a week do you initiate working contact with your superior? With other managers on an equal level or higher than your superior?

20. Do you have social contact with your superior? How often? With other managers on an equal or higher level than your superior? How often?

Questions 18, 19 and 20 are based on the hypothesis that the successful executive will perceive the importance of his superior and the organization in executive development and will himself initiate interaction with the same either directly on business or indirectly vice social engagements. (Mintzberg, 1973, pp. 45 & 271), (March & Simon, 1958, p. 66), (Hegarty, 1978, p. 137)



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